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Goodness Brings a Downpour

Monkey Series 29

Goodness Brings a Downpour

This is the twenty-ninth in a series of thirty-four picture books based on the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*. In the previous book a leopard spirit tricked Monkey, Pig and Friar Sand and then took the Tang Priest to his cave to eat him. Monkey found the cave, but the demon tried to trick him again. Monkey, suspecting an evil plot, turned himself into a firefly, flew into the cave and rescued the Tang Priest.

Goodness Brings a Downpour, with forty-six colour illustrations, tells how Monkey helps to bring rain to a drought-stricken prefecture. The Tang Priest and his disciples reach the prefecture and learn that not a drop of rain has fallen in three years. The Tang Priest orders Monkey to try to make rain, but he finds out that the prefect has brought on the drought by offending Heaven. Monkey persuades the prefect to pray to Buddha and do good. Thus rain falls and all the people are saved.

The next book in the series:

In the next book in the series, *Yellow Lion Steals the Weapons*, the princes of Yuhua City take Monkey, Pig and Friar Sand as their teachers and send for smiths to make copies of their weapons. The Yellow Lion Demon steals the weapons. Monkey recovers their weapons, but the demon asks a monster for help. When the monster captures the king and princes of Yuhua as well as the Tang Priest, Monkey invites the Heavenly Honoured Saviour to subdue the monster and free them. The monster turns out to be the Heavenly Honoured Saviour's nine-headed lion.

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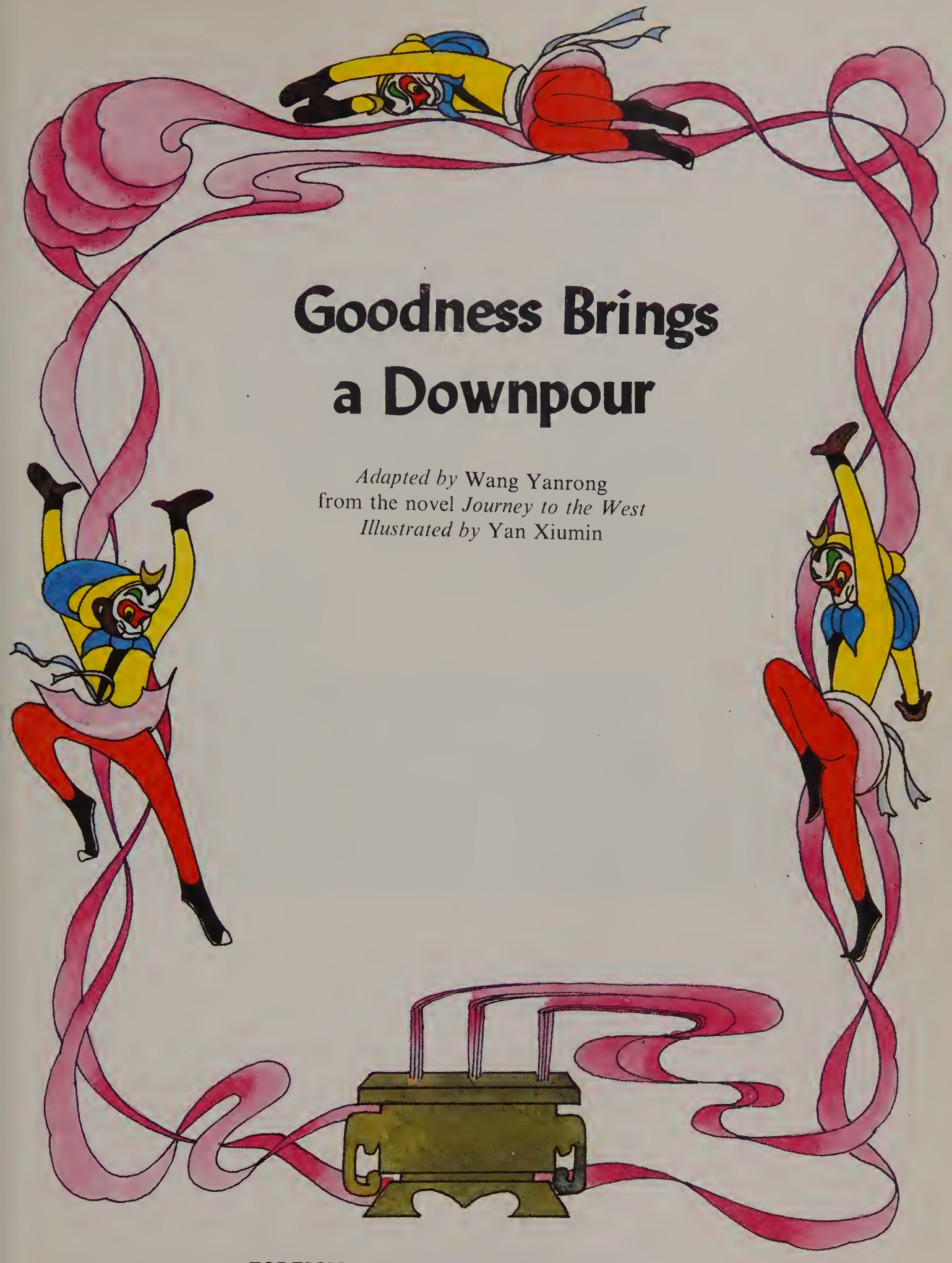

Goodness Brings a Downpour

Adapted by Wang Yanrong
from the novel *Journey to the West*
Illustrated by Yan Xiumin

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The last book told how the Leopard Demon in the Linked-Ring Cave tried to catch the Tang Priest. After Monkey rescued his master, the Tang Priest and his three disciples went on their way to the West. One day they suddenly saw a city wall and moat in the distance. "Monkey," said the Tang Priest, "is that city ahead of us India?"

"No, no," said Monkey, shaking his head. "That city is probably one of the outer prefectures of India."

Soon they were outside the city. As they went through the gate, they found the streets bleak and desolate and the people all looking worried.

Pig went ahead, raising his snout and shouting, "Out of the way! Out of the way!" People on the street looked up with a start, and when they saw what he looked like, they all shouted, "Evil spirits! Evil spirits!"

An official came up to them and asked, "Where are you from?" The Tang Priest, afraid his disciples would cause trouble, pushed himself forward and said, "I am a monk sent to fetch the scriptures from Thunder Monastery in India. Our journey brings us to this distinguished place. We shall be very grateful to you for taking care of us."

Only then did the official return his courtesy and say, "This is the prefecture of Fengxian, one of the outer prefectures of India. Because we have been suffering from drought for years on end, the prefect has sent us to put up a notice here calling for masters of the dharma to pray for rain and save the people."

"Bring the notice here and show me," said Monkey when he heard this. The officials then unrolled the notice and hung it up under the eaves. Monkey and his master went up to read it, and this is what it said: "Fengxian Prefecture has been afflicted with drought for a long time. The common people cannot survive. If someone will pray for rain to save the people, he will be richly rewarded for his kindness with a thousand pieces of silver."

When the Tang Priest had read it, he asked, "Disciples, if any of you know how to pray for rain, do the people a good turn." Monkey laughed and said, "I can turn rivers upside down, stir up the sea, breathe out mist and clouds, carry mountains, drive the moon along — anything. What's so difficult about praying for rain?"

When the officials heard that Monkey could pray for rain, they immediately sent someone to report to the prefect. "Your Excellency, something very splendid has happened." The prefect, who was burning incense and praying silently at the time, asked what it was. The official told him what had happened.

The prefect went straight to where the Tang Priest was, bowed and said, "I am the prefect of Fengxian Prefecture. I beg you in your great mercy to use your divine powers to save the people."

The Tang Priest said, "This is no place to talk. Let's go to a temple to discuss matters." Master and disciples then led the horse and carried the baggage to the official residence, where they all exchanged greetings and the prefect ordered tea and vegetarian food.

When the meal was over, the prefect said, "For three years we have suffered from drought. If you are able to pray for rain to save the people, you will be rewarded with a thousand pieces of silver." When Monkey heard this, he chuckled. "If you promise us a reward of a thousand pieces of silver, you won't get a single drop of rain. But if you say we'll gain merit, I'll provide plenty of rain."

When the prefect, a thoroughly upright and good man, who cared deeply for his people, heard that Monkey was willing to pray for rain for the people, he bowed to him and expressed his thanks. "Please get up," said Monkey. "If you look after my master well, I shall do the job at once."

Monkey asked Pig and Friar Sand to go with him, and the three went outside. The prefect hurriedly burned incense and prayed. The Tang Priest sat there reciting sutras.

Outside, Pig and Friar Sand stood on each side as Monkey recited a spell and said magic words. A dark cloud appeared in the east and slowly moved towards them.

The cloud gradually turned into a human form and said, "Why have you sent for me, Great Sage?" Monkey leapt into the air and said, "There has been a drought in this prefecture for years on end. Couldn't you send some rain?" "I would never dare make rain without the Jade Emperor's consent," the dragon king replied.

"Our journey brought us here and we saw how long the people had suffered. I asked you specially to come here to make rain and save the people," said Monkey. "Why are you trying to get out of it?" The dragon king said, "I'd never dare try to get out of it. If you, Great Sage, sincerely wish rain, you must go to the Heavenly Palace to obtain an edict from the Jade Emperor so that I can make rain in the amount ordered."

Accepting his argument, Monkey let him go back to the sea. Then Monkey went back into the mansion and told the Tang Priest what the dragon king had said. "In that case you had better go, since you promised," the Tang Priest said.

Monkey, telling Pig and Friar Sand to look after their master while he went up to the Heavenly Palace, leapt straight up to go to the palace.

In the twinkling of an eye he was outside the Western Gate of Heaven, where the heavenly king greeted him and asked, "What are you here for, Great Sage?" Monkey replied, "On the way to fetch the scriptures we reached Fengxian Prefecture. It hasn't rained for a long time, so I've come to ask the Jade Emperor for an edict to permit the dragon kings to make rain."

The heavenly king said, "That prefect offended Heaven. The Jade Emperor had a rice mountain, a flour mountain and a huge gold lock set up in order to punish him." Not understanding what it was all about, Monkey insisted on seeing the Jade Emperor, and the heavenly king had to let him in.

Going straight to the Hall of Universal Brightness, Monkey was met by four heavenly teachers, who asked, "What are you here for, Great Sage?" Monkey said again that he had come to ask for rain. The four heavenly teachers started to explain the hows and whys, but Monkey cut them short and said, "Don't talk so much. Please take me to see the Jade Emperor."

The four heavenly teachers took Monkey to the Hall of Miraculous Mist, where they reported, "Your Majesty, Monkey has reached Fengxian Prefecture and wants to ask for rain. He has come for an edict."

"Three years ago," the Jade Emperor replied, "I went to inspect Fengxian Prefecture. I saw that the prefect had knocked over the offerings to Heaven to feed to the dogs, and he spoke dirty words, offending Heaven. That is why I had three things set up in the Hall of Fragrance. If those three things haven't been accomplished, I absolutely won't grant rain."

The four heavenly teachers took Monkey to the Hall of Fragrance. The hall was very large and high, and there were two mountains in front of it. One was a mountain of rice about a hundred feet high; a chicken was eating the rice. The other was a mountain of flour about two hundred feet high; a little dog was licking the flour.

Monkey went around the two mountains and saw an iron frame with a great golden padlock hanging in the middle. Under it a lamp was heating the lock.

The heavenly teachers said to Monkey, "That place will not have rain until the chicken has eaten all the rice, the dog has licked up all the flour, and the lamp has melted the bar of the lock."

When Monkey heard this, he went pale with shock, and he dared make no more requests of the Jade Emperor. He left the hall in a huff.

The four heavenly teachers advised Monkey, "If the prefect does good deeds and his behaviour moves Heaven, the three things will be accomplished. Go back at once to persuade the prefect to return to goodness, then blessings will come of themselves."

After hearing this, Monkey took leave of the four heavenly teachers, mounted the somersault cloud and returned to Fengxian Prefecture.

When the prefect, the Tang Priest, Pig, Friar Sand and all the officials, high and low, saw Monkey returning, they crowded round him to ask about the request for rain.

Monkey pointed at the prefect and shouted, "It's all because three years ago you knocked the offerings to Heaven over to feed dogs. Your behaviour offended the heavenly court. That's why rain wasn't sent and the people suffered."

The prefect was so alarmed that he dared not conceal anything. He said hurriedly, "One day three years ago I quarrelled with my wife. Because she said bad things to me, in an outburst of fury I knocked over the table with the offerings, scattering the food, and called the dogs to eat it up. For the last couple of years it has been preying on my mind."

Monkey told him that that day the Jade Emperor happened to be visiting the lower world and saw how disrespectful the prefect was, so he had the three things set up. Pig interrupted and said, "Brother Monkey, if you take me with you, I can eat the mountains of rice and flour and snap the bar of the lock. I can guarantee rain." The Tang Priest exclaimed, "This is a plan made by Heaven. Don't fool with it!"

"It's not difficult to bring rain," Monkey said. "As I was leaving, the four heavenly teachers said this could be accomplished if the prefect prayed to the Buddha, recited scriptures, and did much good to atone for his crime before it was too late." The prefect heard the teachings and kowtowed in worship.

At once the prefect summoned all the Buddhist and Taoist priests in the city and ordered that a site be prepared for religious ceremonies. He ordered all men and women, young and old, in the city to burn incense sticks and pray to Buddha. From that moment on all ears were filled with virtuous sounds.

When Monkey saw this, he was very happy. "You two look after our master," he said to Pig and Friar Sand. "I'm going back to submit another request for rain to the Jade Emperor." He set off on his cloud and went straight to the Heavenly Palace.

When Monkey reached the Western Gate of Heaven and was about to go in, the heavenly king in charge of the Hall of Fragrance appeared and, greeting him, said, "The rice and flour mountains have collapsed, and the bar of the lock has also been broken. I have reported the matter to the Jade Emperor. Great Sage, there's no need for you to go to see the Jade Emperor. You should go to borrow some thunder generals."

Monkey accepted this suggestion and went straight to the Office of First Request in the Ninth Heaven. Paying his respects to the thunder gods, he said, "Because I saw the people in Fengxian Prefecture had long been suffering from drought, I asked the Jade Emperor especially for rain. The Jade Emperor can now make rain, so I have come to ask for the help of the thunder generals."

The thunder generals took their orders. Before long they had reached the sky over Fengxian Prefecture and started performing their magic. In a twinkling the thunder boomed and the lightning flashed; rivers and mountains shook.

Inside or outside the city of Fengxian nobody had heard the sound of thunder for three whole years. Now that the thunder was booming and the lightning flashing they all fell to their knees and kowtowed again and again, saying, "Amitabha." In an instant the good sounds soared to the skies.

When the Jade Emperor was told that the rice and flour mountains had collapsed and the bar of the lock had been broken and he heard the good sounds coming from the world of mortals, he felt very pleased, so he issued an edict ordering the departments of wind, cloud and rain and dragon kings to make rain.

The heavenly gods went to Fengxian Prefecture and joined the thunder generals. Instantly the wind came up and clouds gathered, thunder boomed and lightning flashed; the sweet rain began to pour down.

It rained a whole day. The heavenly gods began to get ready to leave, but Monkey said, "Wait a moment until I tell the prefect to bow to you and express his thanks." Then he took his cloud down to earth and landed in front of the city.

The prefect, officials and common people all greeted him. "Stop thanking me," said Monkey. "You should order everyone in the city to give thanks to the heavenly gods."

The prefect issued urgent orders, summoning people to kowtow with incense sticks in their hands to give thanks to the heavenly gods. The Tang Priest and his disciples left Fengxian Prefecture joyfully and continued their journey to the West to fetch the Buddhist scriptures.

39

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26. The Bottomless Cave
27. Country Without Monks
28. The Ogre of Linked-Ring Cave

The *MONKEY SERIES* of picture books is based on the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*, a tale rich in episodes about demons and monsters trying to stop the Tang Priest Xuanzang from reaching Thunder Monastery in India to fetch the Buddhist scriptures. The real hero of this novel, beloved by Chinese readers for four hundred years, is the resourceful, brave and humorous Monkey.

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